

On the Time for Armed Struggle

Some General Lessons of the Armed Struggle in the Philippines

Since the great revolutionary wars of liberation began earlier in this century, few issues have drawn more controversy in revolutionary and pseudo-revolutionary circles than the question of armed struggle and of how and when to employ it. On the one hand examples can be cited of disaster following premature rushes into armed struggle, while on the other hand there have been failures of movements to realise revolutionary potential by holding back from armed methods.

Certainly it is a fact that over the past quarter of a century, one of the outstanding features of world developments has been the readiness of large numbers of people to accept and to participate in what is commonly known as the highest form of revolutionary struggle, the armed struggle. For both the mass of the people, and those who have ruled and oppressed them, this is the truly great point of social crisis, the outcome of which can lead to a sweeping change of political power.

Because of the decisive results that can follow from an armed smashing of the main instruments of power held by a ruling class or a foreign oppressor, some of those who acquire a revolutionary outlook are eager to move to the stage of armed struggle; and their concept of it as the highest form of revolutionary struggle causes them to cast discredit upon other forms as 'less advanced', as amounting to collaboration with or capitulation to the class enemy.

Too often the aura of glory associated with taking up arms has obscured hard prosaic truths and realities in the interplay of forces in a period of sharp struggle.

The armed liberation struggles that began in Africa, particularly in the southern part of the continent in the early 1960s, could and did benefit from the experiences and the lessons, the successes and the mistakes, of the revolutionary wars that had preceded them, in Asia, Latin America and elsewhere. Today, lessons from the strategy and tactics and experiences of FRELIMO, MPLA, PAIGC, ZAPU, ANC and others are already being studied with hopes of application by revolutionaries in other countries.

Learning from Experience:

This analysis and understanding of the revolutionary experiences of others is indispensable in the intertwined circumstances of the contemporary world. There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn from such studies. Perhaps the first and most important is that conditions vary greatly in the countries concerned, and that strategy and tactics in each case have started from these, and must start from these. Furthermore, certain conditions of crisis in the ruling order together with mass preparation for advanced struggle must exist before armed struggle is possible or feasible. No responsible revolutionary would contend otherwise after the abundant evidence of relatively recent history.

Another conclusion of significance is that a system or a ruling order defeated and overthrown by armed revolution is in most cases unlikely to regain power; but a revolutionary movement defeated in an armed struggle is invariably able to recover soon and to resume the contest for power, in forms armed or otherwise, until victory is attained.

The fact that stands out from the latter conclusion is that while armed struggle may be the highest form of revolutionary struggle, it is the be-all and end-all of a revolutionary movement, which may move from less-advanced forms to the highest form and back to less-advanced without losing either its vanguard role or its sight of main goals.

One of the major arenas of revolutionary armed struggle in the contemporary period has been in the Philippines, location of the Communist-led Huk movement. The experiences of the revolutionary movement in the Philippines offer an interesting example of the complex, varied and fluctuating processes that may occur in a liberation struggle.

For a period of 32 years, since the beginning of 1942, the Philippine national liberation movement has known constant armed struggle of one form and degree or another, particularly the main sectors of it under the guidance of the *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas* (PKP). At times this has reached the extent of full-scale revolutionary war on a regional or on a national scale; at other times it has had the character of small unit actions.

Contributing to this fighting spirit of the Filipino people is a long history filled with astonishingly numerous instances of armed uprising, insurrection or full-scale revolutionary war. During the 378 years of Spanish colonial rule, from 1520 to 1898, over 200 recorded cases of armed revolt occurred, culminating in the great

Revolution of 1896, the first genuine colonial revolution in Asia. During the 48 years of US colonial rule, that followed the US imperialist seizure of the country from Spain, lasting from 1898 to 1946, Filipinos in nearly 50 other separate episodes took to arms for liberation or against abuses, including major nation-wide guerrilla wars against US conquest and against Japanese occupation during World War II. Since the neo-colonial independence of the Philippines in 1946, not a single year has passed without armed struggles in one part or another of the country, particularly the major Huk guerrilla war for national liberation lasting from 1946 to 1956.

Two Sides of the Balance Sheet

Some observers may be tempted to draw a conclusion from this that the Filipino people have a very high political and revolutionary consciousness, and that decisive numbers of them will at any given time readily move to the highest form of revolutionary struggle, provided a determined leadership is prepared to make such calls or demands upon them. This would be an ill-founded assumption.

The impressive record of militant struggle by the Filipino people needs to be set beside the fact that none of the revolutionary wars and uprisings was really successful in achieving its aims. The vast majority of these had no clear-cut aims but were temporary episodes, of a millenarian character, or of spontaneous upsurge, or of sporadic revolt, in which conscious or well-developed revolutionary movements did not figure, and which were either quickly or soon suppressed. However, even when effective and skillful leadership of a high order *did* exist, as in the case of the Revolution of 1896, in its continuation into a war against US conquest at the turn of the century, and in the two major Communist-led guerrilla wars of the recent decades, the armed struggles did not end in triumph for the people's cause, and were followed by an ebbing of the revolutionary tide.

Although the Revolution of 1896, begun by an organised revolutionary movement called the Katipunan, shook Spanish colonialism to its foundations it did not succeed in overthrowing Spain's rule, which itself succumbed and surrendered to the conquest of a more powerful, predatory US imperialism.

The next important appearance of a revolutionary army in the Philippines did not occur until the beginning of 1942, after Japanese invasion in World War II. In the intervening time a deeply-rooted working class movement had been organised among urban workers and poor peasants, with the main leadership coming from the *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas* or PKP (Communist Party of the Philippines, founded in 1930).

The organised peasantry were located chiefly in the central provinces of the main Philippine island of Luzon, in Neuva Ecija, Pampanga, Bulacan and Tarlac. Militant peasant unions had developed there because the semi-feudal tenancy relations were more extensive and abusive in that region and because it was relatively close to and influenced by the trade union movement in the city of Manila, the Philippine industrial and political capital.

Guerrilla warfare of a revolutionary type against Japanese occupation would not have taken place without these preconditions of mass organisation and Communist leadership, experienced over a period of years in a multitude of strikes, demonstrations, legal battles and class-based electoral campaigns. The *Hukbo ng Bayan Laban Sa Hapon*, or *Hukbalahap* (literally Army of the People Against Japan), the PKP-led guerrilla army that was built and that numbered 15,000 to 20,000 soldiers by the end of the war, was mobilised mainly out of the pre-war peasant unions, the National Association of Philippine Peasants and the General Workers' Union, augmented by Communist trade unionists and intellectuals from Manila.

In the Philippines, resistance to the Japanese was very widespread; guerrilla units of one kind and another developed not only in Central Luzon but existed in every region. These were mostly set up in loyalty to the colonial regime and were led by US army officers, Philippine colonial army men, conservative Filipino politicians and similar ruling group elements. For the most part these units were relatively passive until called into action in co-ordination with the re-invading US forces in the latter part of 1944; in the case of their leaders at least, they were hostile to the *Hukbalahap*, which was the only guerrilla force that organised and politicalised the masses, set up underground governments, and functioned as a revolutionary movement.

A revolutionary armed liberation movement was possible against Japanese fascism only in areas where Communist-led mass organisations and their struggles had previously existed. The PKP-led *Hukbalahap* made errors and had shortcomings in finding its way in guerrilla struggle, and these retarded the movement's growth; expansion into areas was also made difficult, and occurred to a very limited extent because prior mass organisational work had not been done and because anti-Communist guerrilla units were established in such areas; these impeded access to the unorganised masses. Within the context of the anti-fascist struggle, it would have been disunifying and of aid to the Japanese to carry a fight to such units (although some clashes did occur). At the end of the war, therefore, the organised Filipino masses with a revolutionary army were localised in an area not much larger than that of the pre-war mass movement. However, the organisation, political consciousness, combat experience and general maturity of the movement in this area had been raised to a far higher level.

In recent years ultra-left elements, dismissing the validity of anti-fascist concepts, have attacked the PKP for not opposing US imperialism as well as Japanese imperialism during World War II, and then for not converting a war-time guerrilla struggle immediately into an armed struggle for national liberation against a continued US imperialist presence. Questions raised against the anti-fascist struggle as such scarcely deserve an answer. Criticism of the post-war national liberation struggle is another matter, and requires answering.

Combining Legal with Illegal

At war's end the PKP was confronted with serious problems of strategy and tactics. In relation to the Philippines as a whole, PKP organisation, influence and the Huk movement it had built were confined to a relatively small area. Independence of the Philippines, negotiated before the war by the conservative Filipino ruling groups, was scheduled to occur soon after the war, in July 1946, so that a national liberation issue was muted. The neo-colonial intentions of the 'independence' were understood by very few Filipinos, the majority of whom, after a very harsh Japanese occupation were inclined to welcome returning US forces as 'liberators'. A euphoria of peace and independence pervaded most of the nation. Conflict existed only in Central Luzon, where US imperialism, aware of the limited scope of the revolutionary movement, deliberately sought to provoke a 'peace and order' situation as an excuse for suppressing it.

To meet this situation, the PKP adopted a legal, parliamentary struggle programme, to rebuild trade unions and peasant unions and to extend them as widely as possible, and to develop a nationalist, anti-imperialist united front political force. This would help consolidate existing bases and reach to and educate wider masses of people. A united front political party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), was set up with PKP assistance to participate in elections, especially the national election of April 1946.

At the same time, however, the *Hukbalahap* veterans retained their arms, refusing to surrender them to the US colonial regime or to the handpicked neo-colonial government of Filipino collaborators to whom independence was delivered; they used their arms for defence against landlord-directed assaults that had begun on the organised peasantry as soon as US authority had been restored. The PKP conducted armed defence of the mass organisations and of organised barrios (villages) while trying to expand the broad movement by every legal form.

This period, in other words, was marked by a transition from full-scale emphasis on the highest form of revolutionary struggle to a main emphasis on 'less-advanced'

forms. A central aim of this shift was to be able to reach and organise masses of people, especially those new to organisation, as quickly as possible, and to awaken them to the realities of the neo-colonial independence.

The period when this was freely possible after World War II was relatively brief, from mid-1945 until August 1946. Nevertheless, some very important work was done. The new peasant union, the *Pam bansang Kaisahan ng mga Magbubukid* or PKM (National Union of Peasants), brought peasant organisation to a new height in Central and Southern Luzon and began to reach beyond these regions; the new trade union movement, the Congress of Labour Organisations (CLO), rebuilt unions not only in Manila but in provincial towns and established fraternal links with other union federations elsewhere in the Philippines; and the Democratic Alliance achieved at least the framework of a national party. In general, the spread of the mass movement and its component parts was faster and wider in this short period than in the nearly four years of guerrilla existence.

The height was reached in the election of April 1946 when the Democratic Alliance candidates for Congress swept the elections in the Central Luzon provinces and made a strong showing in peripheral provinces, for the first time putting an anti-imperialist bloc in the Philippine Congress (it held the decisive balance in the voting on the neo-colonial legislation demanded by the US to enable continued imperialist control of the country).

Again to Arms

Much of the subsequent successful expansion of the Huk movement in the armed struggle that broke out in August 1946 was due to the organisational and contact groundwork laid in this brief period of legal, parliamentary struggle. For example, the creation of a Huk armed force outside of Luzon in the central islands, especially on Panay Island, was largely an outcome of the links established in 1945-46 between the CLO on Luzon and the Philippine Labour Federation based on Panay. Huk expansion forces in the armed struggle of the late 1940s and early 1950s tended to follow the path of the PKM, CLO and DA organisational work done in 1945-46.

It was the success of the PKP-influenced mass movement in legal, parliamentary struggle, while peasants in Central Luzon continued to retain arms, that caused US imperialism and its neo-colonial allies to arbitrarily oust DA congressmen from office (on grounds that a 'peace and order' problem existed in their constituencies and caused voter terrorisation) and to embark on savage military suppression of the popular movement. The objectives of this 'mailed fist' campaign that began in August 1946 were to smash the armed peasant units in Central Luzon and to drive the anti-imperialist movement out of the arena of legal struggle.

The post-war Huk armed national liberation struggle began, therefore, not as a planned uprising but as armed defence against suppression. At first it was not a total fascist policy imposed by the government; while military suppression went on in the Central and Southern Luzon provinces, legal mass work could still be carried on, especially in the trade unions, but also in most other ways in Manila and other cities. In this mixed and confused period, characterised at the outset by the demoralisation that usually accompanies the beginning of harsh government suppressive measures, the PKP had to struggle to overcome disarray in its organisation and to develop under fire a new strategic and tactical line to fit the new situation.

On the one hand, a PKP demand was made for a 'democratic peace' around which manoeuvres were conducted to expose the true nature of the neo-colonial regime nationally and to win sympathy and allies for the Huk movement; and on the other hand the armed struggle was strengthened in the rural areas for any eventuality.

As the neo-colonial government between 1946 and 1948 became progressively more discredited for its brutal suppression policy, for its corruption, for its electoral fraud, and for a steep economic decline that was the consequence of rapacious US imperialist economic domination and exploitation, a debate occurred with the PKP over the conduct of the struggle; the question was whether or not to give the main emphasis to armed struggle and to the revolutionary overthrow of the neo-colonial regime as the central issue.

In May 1948 those favouring armed struggle as the main form of struggle won overwhelming support in PKP organs and assumed full leadership of the movement. A policy was pressed of all-out nation-wide armed expansion by Huk forces, the name of which was changed from the anachronistic war-time *Hukbalahap* to *Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan* or HMB (Army of National Liberation).

Expansion was carried out by military-political teams, 50 to 100 strong, that, utilising mountain and jungle trails, fanned out from Central Luzon base areas. These in time established bases in wholly new regions previously unreachable by left-wing movements, created barrio support organisations, and recruited members for both the armed forces and the PKP. From an original five base provinces the HMB expanded to and set up bases in 27 provinces between 1948 and 1951, under the circumstances a remarkable achievement.

In January 1950, following a particularly fraudulent election that caused national outrage, the PKP and HMB declared the existence of a revolutionary situation and called for the armed revolutionary overthrow of the 'imperialist-puppet regime'. All

organisational activities of a legal, peaceful or parliamentary nature were dispensed with, and all possible PKP members and supporters were thrown into the development of the armed struggle. The movement was imbued with the perspective of a relatively short struggle, with the estimate of a deteriorating situation for the neo-colonial regime from which no recovery was considered possible.

Summing Up

These estimates and aims proved to be illusory and unrealisable. The Huk national liberation struggle in the Philippines in this period failed to attain its goals, failed to convert a strategic defensive situation decisively into one of strategic offensive, failed to consolidate or to maintain its expansion bases, and, between 1950 and 1956, suffered a disastrous defeat.

In its subsequent assessment of the reasons for this, the PKP has criticised the following:

The erroneous estimate that a revolutionary situation existed at the beginning of 1950 and that the existing regime could no longer rule in the old way; The reliance on armed struggle as virtually the only form of struggle and the abandonment of other forms of struggle that were not only feasible but essential for mobilising the masses;

The tendency for the PKP to proclaim its hegemony over the national liberation struggle, and the corresponding failure to develop an anti-imperialist national democratic united front; an underestimation of the intervention by US imperialism to aid its neo-colonial allies.

Although US troops were not employed against the Huk movement directly even from the extensive US military bases in the Philippines, the Philippine government army was totally armed, equipped, organised, trained and directed in counter-insurgency operations by a large Joint US Military Advisory Group, which controlled the Philippine army and intelligence services under a Mutual Assistance Pact. With no outside aid from international allies whatsoever, the HMB was not able to match the firepower and technological capability of its opponents.

Primarily the PKP was at fault for failing to give serious attention to the question of international support, either moral or material, for the liberation struggle. However, the island character of the Philippines, without a border with friendly countries or areas where guerilla forces could retreat, regroup, rest, train or create supply lines,

was a basic factor in the military situation, as was the many-islanded archipelago itself which was an obstacle to expansion and to mobility of the HMB.

Military disadvantages were perhaps less significant than the fact US imperialism was able to put forward an appearance of reform in measures that swayed large numbers of the Filipino people at a critical stage. From 1950 onwards such reforms as a toning down of the more flagrant corruption and electoral fraud, a moderation of the more brutal methods of terror and suppression by the government armed forces, and an adoption of land reform legislation all tended to affect the masses, including those in Central Luzon provinces. None of these measures were serious, deep or lasting, least of all the gestures at land reform; but the fact that significant numbers of people clutched at them hopefully (a tendency most noticeable in middle strata of the population) indicated that the PKP estimate that the people were no longer willing to be ruled in the same way was premature.

In the early 1950s the HMB and the PKP were decimated by repeated government military operations, suffering extremely heavy losses in armed forces and political cadres. One of the first disasters, due to faulty security measures and to overconfidence, was the capture in October 1950 of the PKP secretariat, at the time in charge of directing the struggle. In most of the new regions, expansion forces were wiped out, and so many had been sent out on expansion assignment from the Central Luzon bases that these were gravely weakened as well. In the PKP, the entire central committee and political bureau members chosen to replace them in 1951 suffered the same total fate. Similar devastating losses and attrition occurred among cadres of secondary rank.

The decimation of party cadres and the resultant weakening of the organisational structure of the Party and of discipline led in some cases to the degeneration of Huk armed forces into banditry and gangsterism. Worst of these cases was in western Pampanga province where a former Huk cadre, Commander Sumulong, built his own domain of 'protectionism', mulcting the peasants while making deals with landlords, reactionary politicians and police, and with US army commanders at the huge Clark Air Base. Sumulong and his associates pretended still to be Huks and to lead a 'people's army', while committing depredations that were publicised in the reactionary press as 'Huk activities'. The Sumulong gang persisted until 1970, when both PKP armed anti-gangster action and government harassment caused the surrender or liquidation of its leaders.

Organisation - The Deciding Factor

When the armed struggle of this period had been subdued or had subsided, it was the original base areas of Central and Southern Luzon that remained relatively

stable. In the expansion areas little remained of a mass movement that had not had time to grow strong. *These experiences tended to confirm a belief that solid and stable mass bases were those that had been built not so much by armed struggle as by the long and patient work and experience of organisation and education around the daily life, needs and demands of the people.*

In guerrilla struggles where liberated areas are possible, the organisation of people and their real involvement in mass work, productive effort or self-government during the armed struggle is feasible. In the case of the Philippines, however, it has not been possible in the modern period to achieve liberated areas. Both the *Hukbbalahap* during World War II and the HMB

Operated in and attempted to maintain an underground movement in the same territory where government troops were based and moved freely and where the ruling government functioned. The geographical features of the Philippine islands permitted easy mobility and relatively rapid operations of the government forces, and prevented militarily permanent or stable bases for Huk forces. In the course of the struggle in the post-war period US and neo-colonial forces improved the advantages they had, building military roads into and criss-crossing Huk base areas, draining swamps that had been guerrilla refuges, and gridding the country with counter-guerrilla facilities, reducing further any liberated area potential.

The nature of guerrilla activity itself had to undergo changes as this occurred. During the Japanese occupation - i.e., in a war against a foreign invader - it was possible to maintain large guerrilla units of up to regimental size, and to bivouac in or very near the barrios. This meant very close relations with the people. Large unit, barrio-based forces were possible in the early post-war period, too; but as the US and neo-colonial forces perfected their tactics, guerrilla forces were compelled to base themselves deeper and deeper in mountains and jungles, and to curtail the size of units, thus undergoing considerable isolation from the people. This process continued until the large guerrilla unit of even platoon size became risky and vulnerable, making the small unit mandatory, although with carefully-designed tactics it became easier to keep close to or to live among the people.

An observable aspect of total or overwhelming emphasis on armed struggle is that mass participation in struggle may actually diminish, although it is usually believed that mass support of guerrillas has the opposite characteristic. Armed guerrillas represent as a rule a small percentage of the population. Their participation is of a high order; but for most of the rest of the people in Philippine conditions all but limited underground organisation and activity are banned, especially during the large scale evacuations that occur. During the peak of counter-insurgency, when guerrillas may be driven into isolation from the masses, the masses may also suffer

isolation from politicalisation and lack the organised means of resisting a terror coupled with 'reforms'. *The question of forms of organisation for those not holding the guns becomes of major importance.*

By 1956 the PKP had shifted its main emphasis from armed forms of struggle to legal, parliamentary forms. This was not wholly dictated by weakness and setback: a new situation had developed in the Philippines, in part stimulated by the long Huk struggle, in which a nationalist movement, particularly of bourgeois nationalist elements, was growing and coming into conflict with the neo-colonial policies and methods of US imperialism. The possibility of broad united front work and of creating new forms of mass organisation as well as the revival of old forms was becoming increasingly apparent.

To Go Back - As Well As Forward

As in 1945, this was a transition by the PKP from the highest form of revolutionary struggle to 'less-advanced' forms. It was possible to cling to armed struggle on a minor scale, with the orientation that the conditions in the country could deteriorate again and make masses of people ready for it; but to have continued to make this the *main* concentration would have meant even greater isolation from the masses in a period when extensive mass organisation along other lines was possible. The line adopted was above all based on the necessity of utilising forms which maintained the closest contact with the masses. Armed forces that were not completely dissolved were kept in being on a small unit scale, chiefly in a security capacity, to protect underground cadres (the PKP has remained constantly underground, outlawed by an Anti-Subversion Law that provides up to the death penalty for violation), to protect organised places from infiltration by enemy intelligence agents, and to carry out people's justice against traitors, spies and criminals.

In the decade between 1956 and 1966 the PKP was able to rebuild itself and to set in motion a massive open national democratic movement. Old cadres emerging from prison or being reactivated after a period of demoralised passivity played a part in this; but the main organisational thrust came from a large number of new young members who had been both inspired by the example of the Huk struggle and aroused by the frustrations of a neo-colonial independence.

A new peasant union, the *Malayang Samahang Magsasaka* or MASAKA (Free Association of Peasants), arose and spread rapidly in the old Huk base areas of Central and Southern Luzon, augmented by the failure or non-implementation of the 'land reform' introduced on paper to win people away from the Huk movement in the early 1950s. New anti-imperialist trade union leaders came to the fore in the cities to oppose the class collaborationism that had been foisted on the labour

movement following the outlawing of the Congress of Labour Organisations in 1951. A new type of broad nationalist organisation, the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism, activated intellectuals, businessmen and middle class groups. Most vocal of all were new youth organisations of militant nationalism which drew large numbers of student youth as well as worker and peasant youth.

With the organisational base laid, this movement grew by leaps and bounds between 1966 and 1972. One of the most important features of this legal mass movement was that it developed successfully not only on Luzon but on all the other main islands in the Philippines - Cebu, Negros, Panay, Mindanao and others. The organisation and influence of the PKP was able in this period to reach much further and more broadly than in the days of Huk armed expansion.

US imperialism and reactionary Filipino neo-colonial interests, alarmed by this development, set out, as in 1946, to smash the popular mass national democratic movement. From 1969 the 'Nixon Doctrine', as elsewhere in Asia, prepared the ground for a fascist-type militarist system in the Philippines that would have as one of its chief aims the abolition of democratic liberties, including suppression of the legal mass movement.

Disruption from Within

However, the key tactics for putting this into effect were devised and carried out within the mass movement itself. The instrument used was a group of young Filipinos who professed to follow the precepts of Mao Tse-tung, and the issues involved were those of armed struggle. From 1968, following the expulsion from the PKP in 1967 of the only leading cadre who had advocated Maoist concepts and who had used sordid intrigue to try to capture the Party organisation for his ends, a Maoist organisation was developed with Peking endorsement, which attempted to divert the national democratic movement into immediate full-scale armed struggle for the overthrow of the government

Usurping the name of the 'Communist Party of the Philippines', which itself was calculated to cause much confusion among the organised masses and the people in general, the Maoist group in 1969 set up its own 'New People's Army' and called for armed struggle as the only revolutionary path of the Filipino people, claiming that a 'revolutionary situation' existed. Being a group wholly of petty-bourgeois students, the Maoists had a major problem of creating an armed force among the peasantry to carry out Mao's mechanically-transferred theory of 'surrounding the cities from the countryside'; the solution arrived at was to form an alliance with a split-off band of the Sumulong gang.

From the outset the Maoist group devoted its main attention to an attack on the PKP, calling PKP leaders 'renegades' and 'revisionists' for not accepting the most extreme of the Mao Tse-Tung theories on armed struggle, and finally resorting to betraying the names of PKP leaders to government intelligence agencies and to employing violence against PKP members and followers. The activities of the Maoists duplicated and had open encouragement from the general international line emanating from Peking of splitting left forces and of pursuing ultra-left tactics; they would have had little effect however, but for The enormous publicity given to them by the imperialist and neo-colonial press and other media in the Philippines, and for the collaborative arrangements offered and entered into with them by reactionary neo-colonial political forces, including in particular Catholic Church groups. These allies of Maoism, with the *CIA* playing a leading part, projected the Maoist group as the 'genuine revolutionaries' in the Philippines, and denigrated the PKP as having sold out, abandoned struggle or ceased to exist.

These tactics, vigorously abetted by US imperialism and its allies, caused serious divisions in the national democratic movement, especially among the student youth who were its most vocal and articulate sector and susceptible to ultra-radical slogans. Among the organised peasants and workers the effect was very slight. The 'NPA' significantly failed to establish itself in Central Luzon, where the peasants were the most advanced in the country in struggle and organisational experience, and it was compelled to retreat from that region and seek refuge in the relatively remote northern province of Isabela.

The 1970-1972 period in the Philippines witnessed great turbulence. Neo-colonial political factions - Nacionalista Party, Liberal Party and the Catholic Christian Social Movement -. fought each other for the privilege of partnership with US interests in shaping the authoritarian system called for by the 'Nixon Doctrine', and increasingly resorted to their own armed forces and 'warlordism'. All factions, including the US imperialists, desired a climate of violence to justify a 'strong-man' grip on power. In collaboration with the liberal Party and Christian Social Movement, the Maoists were drawn into and used in the power struggle. Most of all, US imperialism sought to goad the Maoist and 'NPA' not only to split the national democratic movement but to push it into adopting armed methods prematurely so that it could be bloodily suppressed, as occurred in Indonesia.

In this situation, the PKP worked to mobilise the people for the defence of democratic liberties and against the imposition of fascism on one hand, and against the adventuristic unity-wrecking line of the Maoists on the other that played into the suppressive plans of imperialism. Some PKP members, in the belief that Maoist ultra-left slogans and actions had to be matched in order to keep the PKP in the vanguard and not lose leadership of the people, were provoked into committing

and publicly claiming PKP responsibility for armed actions. The ideological struggle against adventurism and provocation had to be waged within the PKP as well as among the masses.

The Theory of Struggle

The *PKP* theoretical organ *Ang Komunista* (February 1971) replied to Maoist provocations and attacks in this way:

“It is not armed struggle *versus* parliamentary struggle that is the issue) but whether 'armed struggle is the only way' or a revolutionary Party should learn to combine both forms of struggle. On this issue, as in others, we stand firmly on the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. We uphold the principle of *combining* parliamentary and armed struggle; the exact combination depends, of course, on the prevailing political situation ...

“Parliamentary struggle does not mean putting up candidates for elective positions in order to transform the nature of neo-colonial government. It simply means laying stress on utilising whatever democratic rights are available. Strikes, demonstrations, leafleteering, factory gate agitation, etc., form part of parliamentary struggle. In our circumstances parliamentary struggle is not a method of capturing state power and smashing the old state machine. It is merely a technique of breaking the Party's isolation and conducting revolutionary work under extreme conditions of illegality

“... Our Party has always maintained that, in the Philippine context, armed struggle is an indispensable aspect of revolutionary strategy

“We do not entertain the illusion that the neo-colonial ruling classes in the Philippines will ever give up their power and privileges peacefully. The seizure of power can only be accomplished through an armed uprising. But we reject the undialectical thesis that 'armed struggle is the only way'. Armed struggle is doomed to certain failure without popular support, and in building popular support we must utilise other forms of struggle allowed by real circumstances.

“In our assessment of the existing balance of forces, the time for a strategic offensive has yet to come. We are still at the stage of preparation and the main form of struggle is legal or parliamentary struggle. The principal tasks are the politicalisation and organisation of the masses, including the most backward sectors who up to now constitute the vast majority. The armed struggle must be waged even today but it occupies a secondary and subordinate role in relation to the parliamentary struggle. As the revolutionary process develops, however, the armed struggle will steadily

gain importance until objective conditions shall dictate that it be adopted as the main form.”

This whole period terminated abruptly in September 1972 when President Ferdinand Marcos moved decisively both to eliminate his neo-colonial rivals and to suppress the national democratic movement. Declaring a state of martial law, he assumed supreme dictatorial powers, suspended representative government, elections and the activity of political parties, outlawed the principal national democratic mass organisations, forbade free speech or assembly, and banned the right to strike or demonstrate.

In his martial law proclamation, Marcos justified his step wholly on the ground that the 'NPA' posed an immediate threat of the armed overthrow of the government. The adventurist and provocative Maoist armed struggle line had fulfilled the role designed for it by imperialism, and had provided the excuse for suppressing the promising Filipino mass movement before it could reach the stage of seriously challenging the neo-colonial government.

The 1946 and 1972 periods had similarities in the strategy and tactics of imperialism and its neo-colonial allies in suppressing national democratic mass movements of the Filipino people. In both cases imperialism actively worked to create a 'peace and order' situation in order to force the revolutionary movement into armed struggle in unfavorable circumstances not of its own choosing, revealing that the greatest imperialist fear was of the potential of open mass movements. Having succeeded in suppressing the armed struggle of the HMB in the 1950s (it was used in US military circles as proof of the validity of counter-insurgency methods), imperialism was prepared to provoke or manufacture armed struggle in the early 1970s out of confidence that it could be dealt with and made use of to smash the national democratic organisations.

Since the imposition of the martial law dictatorship, the Maoists in the Philippines have continued to insist that the armed struggle is the main form of struggle today, and to call for the armed overthrow of the dictatorship. Although this has been called for insistently since 1969, it has failed to evoke a response from the Filipino masses. Lacking this response, the Maoists have turned increasingly to an affiance with Catholic Church sectors against Marcos, a tendency that is still related to the intrigues of US imperialism which, not fully satisfied with Marcos and having contradictions with him, fosters an opposition as a lever of control.

The PKP, refusing to be involved in neo-colonial power struggles, has adopted the line in a time of difficult semi-fascist conditions of utilising every possible form of activity to maintain close links with the masses. It finds it possible to work amongst

the masses, to bring to them its programme, and to work toward its proclaimed goal of helping to create 'a national united front of all exploited classes, of all patriotic and democratic forces'. In February 1973 the PKP held its underground 5th Congress in Central Luzon and adopted a new programme in which the Party's attitude toward forms of struggle was defined in this way:

“The PKP is the party of the Filipino working class. It rejects putschism, coup d'etat, foco guerrillaism and anarcho-terrorist revolutionism that stands apart from the sentiment of the masses. It does not sanction any political activity that attempts to split the masses from their vanguard party.

“It is to the interest of the masses that the road to revolution is without bloodshed, and they desire that the transfer of power from the forests, of imperialism, feudalism and monopoly capital to the political parties of all exploited classes be peaceful. The conditions for violence are necessarily determined by those who possess the instruments of violence, namely, the ruling circles of imperialism, feudalism and monopoly capital. The PKP and all revolutionary forces must be vigilant and must always be in a state of preparedness in every way to prevent the enemies of the people from obstructing the people's way to peaceful revolutionary transformation of our society. The PKP upholds the right of the people to use force against those who use force against the people.”

The PKP has proven its readiness and capacity to lead the Filipino people in the sharpest and most advanced of struggles, in which thousands of its best members have given their lives. From these it has drawn the lesson, however, that the overriding need is to maintain close links with the masses, in city and countryside, to draw them into every possible kind of mass organisation and activity, and to involve masses in struggle in which they have the sense of participation. Revolutionary armed forces must serve as a detachment of the mass movement, but the highest forms of revolutionary struggle are those that occur when the greatest masses of people are resolutely set in motion for change.

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